

SUBMISSION TO PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING - 15 NOVEMBER 2017.

Irene Mc Swan -

[REDACTED] BARRINGTON 2422.

I speak on behalf of my family who have lived in Gloucester for 4 generations.

Obviously we were born and educated here and with my husband have been in the dairy industry for 44 years. When it was deregulated, we tried to continue in it post deregulation, but found it very much uneconomical.

We then went into the beef industry which was and is very much a roller coaster depending upon the weather and the markets although it is buoyant at the moment, but nothing is certain.

The timber industry with 11 sawmills in the area to Boral has been destroyed by Government decisions with the Greens influence and now only one mill remains and many jobs lost with little chance of reskilling so many of the men.

In last Friday's Newcastle Morning Herald a pallet building business could not buy timber to build pallets.

A younger lady told me she had to re-enter the workforce for nearly 30 years as her husband has no job security to provide for his family and no other worthwhile skills to offer. *Except for timber trade -*

The coal mines at Stratford at the time was a godsend for our town and district and gave our next generation great job security and good incomes. Our son and grandson were employed at Durali, however, son Bradley was retrenched with 45 others last year after 21 years working in the mines resulting in many families having to leave town with their families to gain employment in the Hunter Valley.

It should be noted that our son Bradley has worked on the blasting team for the last 12 years with no ill effects and undergoes a very strict independent medical check every 3 years. If this mine does not proceed he with some other mining workers will need to sell up and move to a place like Singleton losing more families from our district.

As a side note, it is a little disappointing that mine workers are not able to participate during this process with the panel due to the restrictive sitting times.

Gloucester had a chance of some recovery with the AGL Gas Project but had a very noticeable decline in business activity after it closed as exemplified by a significant loss in business like one fuel outlet stating it had a 40% reduction in sales since AGL left; the Post Office, down 16% in postal boxes, two engineering works – one closed the other laid off most of its workforce. There are numerous examples of decline in the area since this closure.

As detailed in the brochure – “It’s not a Mirage, it is Gloucester” displayed on the overhead and tabled with the panel, Gloucester had a very much more vigorous industry base in the 1960’s.

*– Destroyed now by
Government Decisions / Dairies – timber
Industry*

This proposed new mine proceeding ~~in some form~~ will stop the drift of our younger generation from our town and district and produce greater employment over at least 15 years and obviously that will flow on to support other business in town and the community at large. As noted by the recent census, this region has one of the lowest average income per person and is 28% below the NSW level.

GRL has ticked off most of the environmental boxes and we are sure that the government authorities and agencies will keep a very close eye on the provisions of its licence and operations and under the gaze of the community.

We therefore please implore the panel to recommend this mine’s approval because most certainly tourism has not and will not save our town and district into the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you.

Address to Department of Planning – Rocky Hill Mine Proposal - 17-5-17.

MY PERSONAL BACKGROUND

My name is Irene McSawn.

I was born, raised and educated in the Gloucester district and have worked in the dairy industry with my father and now raise a beef cattle property on Waikivory Road, approx. 1.8 km from the proposed mine site.

I also worked in the Home Care Service of NSW for 17 years.

Gloucester had three main industries when I was growing up
– timber, dairy and beef.

Timber:

Over the years our timber industry has gone from 10 mills in the region to 1 mill at Girvan.

There used to be 2 mills in Gloucester, 1 on the outskirts of town
2 at Craven; 2 at Wards River; 1 at Stroud Road
1 each at Stroud and Booral.

Today, ALL mills have closed except for 1. This has caused many job losses in our district for mill workers, transporters, timber cutters and associated timber businesses.

Dairy:

The dairy industry has been an industry in decline since Government deregulation and used to support 140 dairy farms down to less than 15 today. Gloucester once had its own butter factory and powdered milk plant which closed in 2001.

My husband gave up dairying in 2001 after 44 years as it was not economical to continue.

Beef:

We moved into beef farming after we finished dairying which has been an up and down industry, although has improved recently.

Stratford and Duralie Coal Mines:

The Stratford mine was a godsend as it helped our district. Duralie Mine was also great benefit and employer and had great economic benefits for the district.

My grandson is employed at Duralie as was my son but he was retrenched along with 45 others and he now works in a mine in the upper the Hunter. He leaves Gloucester on Sunday afternoons to work on Monday and comes home on Friday. In his words, "it's not much of a life for our family". He told me 25 others leave their families all week. At least 5 families I know of have sold and left Gloucester to work in other mines.

Duralie will totally close in April 2018 when 40 more people will lose their jobs creating more unemployed and loss of population and more large businesses like Kade Engineering and Trevor Ellis Contractors will continue to retrench men as a result of the downturn and pending closure of Duralie.

In Summary

- This mine will greatly benefit our town and district and will allow people to be re-employed and stem the population drift away from the district and encourage the younger generation to return to work in the town.
- My property at Waukivory is in close proximity to the Rocky Hill mine site and I am not worried about it's impact on me or my cattle business.

- Working for 17 years in the Home Care Service with many older clients who lived within a ½ to 1 Km of the Stratford mine and had no complaint with the mine and suffered no ill effects caused by the mine.
- Gloucester lost the chance of another industry in our district with gas, but due in part to a noisy and well organised minority this didn't proceed, and now there is a national shortage of gas.
- Please approve this mine project. As we need the jobs, security and social benefits for local families.

We implore you to recommend the approval of this mine as I firmly believe the benefits of the mine will far outweigh any slight inconvenience
Thank you for the opportunity to put my views to the panel.